

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Kurtis Mayne and I live in Missoula. I am the Assistant Director of Services for Community Employment at Opportunity Resources Inc.

I am here today to explain why I support the increased funding for the Extended Employment program as stated by Reg Gibbs from Rocky Mountain Rehab. In Missoula alone we have 90 individuals on the Extended Employment waiting list. Statewide there are 171 people with disabilities on the Extended Employment waiting list. If you approve the increase in funding for the Extended Employment program we can help shorten this list by putting people to work.

Opportunity Resources Inc. currently serves 55 individuals under this program. Most of these folks would have fallen between the cracks because they are not eligible for The Developmental Disabilities Program but need more support than short term Vocational Rehabilitation can provide. Extended Employment is their only option. All of the people we serve under Extended Employment work and in the last year earned over one-third of a million dollars that they paid taxes on, spend in our area businesses and used to decrease their dependence on other programs. I know that a large number of these individuals would rely much more heavily upon public assistance without the Extended Employment program.

In FY 2008 Opportunity Resources Inc. lost a significant amount of money in this program. Without subsidizing the Extended Employment program with money from our annual sales, we would not be able to continue providing this service. With the downturn in our economy we have seen a 20% decrease in our sales and can not continue to cover these losses. We would like to ask for serious consideration for increased funding for the Extended Employment program and keep people working and contributing to our society.

I believe my time has ended but before I go I want to thank every one of you for your dedication to the citizens of this state. You have a difficult task in front of you and we appreciate your hard work and I am confident you will approve the increased funding for the Extended Employment Program to assist people with disabilities.

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